DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 057 PS 024 477

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TITLE Evaluation of Bryan ISD's Parent Education Partnership Program (PEPP): Implications for Program Development.
PUB DATE 24 Jan 96
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, January 24, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Family Programs; Infants; Interviews; Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Education; *Parent School Relationship; *Partnerships in Education; Preschool Children; Preschool Education; Program Development; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Program Improvement; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Bryan Independent School District TX

ABSTRACT

The Bryan Independent School District's (Texas) Parent Education Partnership Program (PEPP) is designed to "empower all families through information, training, and support to enhance the parent-child relationship within the context of the home, school, and community to assure healthy, productive members of society." The 1994-1995 program consisted of parent educators working one-on-one with 125 families of children under the age of 5 by providing home visits, play groups, parent meetings, and developmental screenings. A formal evaluation was conducted of the PEPP program, consisting of a parent involvement survey for educators related to level of parent involvement, value of parent involvement, knowledge of PEPP program activities, and value of PEPP program. The parent interview consisted of open-ended questions related to activities in which families were involved through the PEPP program and suggestions for improving the program. The PEPP program activities were evaluated positively. Families were overwhelmingly in favor of the program, particularly the home visits. Results also highlighted the small number of families served and the need to expand the program. (Two appendices contain the school and parent survey instruments, and the parent interview results.) (SD)

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ED 399 057

EVALUATION OF BRYAN ISD'S PARENT EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (PEPP): IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

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Paper presented at the Annual Southwest Educational Research Association Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana, January 24, 1996.

Running Head: PEPP Evaluation

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EVALUATION OF BRYAN ISD'S PARENT EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (PEPP): IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Increasingly, schools are realizing the value of parent involvement in the education of children and many schools are seeking ways to encourage and enhance this involvement. Benefits of parent involvement include higher grades and test scores, long-term academic achievement, positive attitudes and behavior, more successful programs, and more effective schools (Henderson, 1987). Other benefits include better attendance, fewer placements in special education, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in postsecondary education (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Achievement is enhanced for children from all socio-economic levels when parents spend time with them in academic activities or are involved in their school activities (Benson, Buckley, & Medrich, 1980). Programs that include home visits and parent education have been found to be particularly effective in improving parent involvement (Brofenbrenner, 1974; Cochran & Henderson, 1986; Olmsted, & Rubin, 1982). One way that the Bryan ISD is addressing parent involvement is through the implementation of the Parent Education Partnership Program, which incorporates components of effective programs.

Bryan ISD's award winning Parent Education Partnership Program (PEPP) has grown from a staff of two part-time employees in 1989 to a staff of seven full-time parent educators working with the PEPP program, as well as four staff working with Project Unity. Thousands of Bryan families have benefited through parent education classes and home visits provided by the PEPP program. During the 1994-95 school year, parent educators worked one-on-one with 125 families of children under the age of five by providing home visits, play groups, parent meetings, and developmental screenings. In addition, the PEPP staff conducted 134 parenting classes on 15 campuses and in the community on a wide range of topics with 1,826 parents attending. While the Milam Elementary and Carver Early Learning Center campuses have parent educators on site, the other four parent educators serve families across the remaining campuses. Two parent educators are bilingual and work with Spanish-speaking only families.

Although PEPP staff regularly receive positive feedback from the families with whom they work, it was determined that a formal evaluation would be beneficial to determine whether or not the program was meeting all the needs of the families it serves and for further program development. The purpose of this paper is to describe the recent evaluation process which occurred. Findings of the program evaluation will be presented

and implications for parent involvement and further development of the PEPP program will be discussed.

Method

Evaluation Advisory Group

In January 1995 a PEPP evaluation committee was formed. This committee of educators and parents reviewed the PEPP program and through a lengthy discussion of parent education and parenting programs, developed the following program description:

> *The Bryan ISD Parent Education Partnership Program is designed to empower all families through information, training, and support to enhance the parent/child relationship within the context of the home, school, and community to assure healthy, productive members of society.*

Once this description, as well as subsequent goals and objectives for the program, was developed, the committee discussed methods for determining how these goals and objectives were being achieved. It was determined that educators (teachers, administrators, and support staff) on each campus within the Bryan ISD needed to be surveyed regarding both parent involvement and their knowledge of the PEPP program. In addition, families participating in the home-visit program needed to be interviewed to determine their satisfaction with the program.

Instrumentation

The parent involvement survey for educators included Likert-type items related to level of parent involvement, value of parent involvement, knowledge of PEPP program activities, and value of PEPP program. The survey also included open-ended questions related to suggestions for increasing parent involvement and parent education needs specific to individual school campuses. The survey was pilot tested by the advisory group and revised. Surveys were color coded according to school campus and distributed to all personnel on each campus. A copy of the school survey is included in Appendix A.

The parent interview consisted of open-ended questions related to activities families were involved in through the PEPP program and types of support provided by parent educators. Respondents were also asked to provide suggestions for improving the program and making the role of the parent educators more effective. The interview also was translated into Spanish. The interview was then piloted on several families and revised. All families served in home visits were interviewed. Results were summarized. A copy of the parent interview schedule is included in Appendix A.

Results

Survey

Surveys were analyzed by campus. Response rates per campus ranged from 25 to 64%, with a mean response rate of 44%. Table 1 summarizes numbers and types of respondents by campus. Means and standard deviations were calculated for all Likert-type items. The first set of items was related to parent involvement: (1) Parents are actively involved on my campus, (2) Parent involvement ins very important to the success of children on my campus, and (3) I would support having a parent educator on my campus. Table 2 presents mean responses to these items by campus. Although perceived parent involvement ranged from one campus to another, all educators agreed that it was important to student success and would support having a parent educator on their campus. Campuses with a parent educator on site tended to have higher levels of parent involvement.

The second set of Likert-type items were related to knowledge of the PEPP program. Of the survey respondents, the percent familiar with the PEPP program ranged from 16 to 100%; however, since numbers of staff responding to this item were relatively small, the higher percentages may not indicate large numbers of educators in the district familiar with the PEPP program. These figures are presented in Table 3 by campus. There were other items in this set related to number of meetings on campuses, attendance at the meetings, value of the meetings, and effectiveness of the PEPP program, but numbers of respondents to these items were too few for meaningful analysis. Responses to this set of items revealed that relatively few Bryan ISD staff members were familiar with the PEPP program and the parent education classes offered.

Open-ended question comments about parent involvement were summarized and listed according to frequency of response. In defining parent involvement, over 100 different definitions were given by educators. Most of the answers related to parents taking an active role in the school and their children's education, supporting school policy, and volunteering. Educators provided many examples of ways to improve parent involvement and listed many needs for parent education. It was interesting to note that educators had long lists of parent education topics they would like to see addressed on their campus, yet they were unaware the district had a program to provide these classes upon request.

Interviews

At the time of this evaluation, parent educators were working with 98 families. Of these families, 26 were teen parents (27%), 20 were Spanish-only speaking families (20%), 24 were English-speaking (24%), and 28 were open enrollment families (29%). Interviews with 62 families (63%) were completed: 15/26 teen parents (58%), 12/20 Spanish-speaking

only families (50%), 12/24 English-speaking families (50%), and 25/28 open enrollment families (89%). A summary of interview results is included in Appendix B.

Overall, families were overwhelmingly in favor of the PEPP program, particularly the home visits. Aspects valued included the provision of developmental information, the nonjudgemental nature of the classes and information provided, and the general support and "being there" provided by the parent educators. Examples of support provided were numerous and included providing alternatives to spanking and helping with toilet training. The only suggestions parents had were related to expanding the program: have more parent educators, continue the program to work with high school age students, have the resource library open more hours, and get information about the program out to more parents.

Implications

Although Bryan ISD's PEPP program is exemplary and has been recognized both at the state level and nationally, PEPP staff have not been able to adequately inform district personnel about the program and what it offers. The PEPP activities are evaluated positively by those attending and by those educators aware of program activities. However, while approximately 2,000 parents have been positively impacted by the program, Bryan ISD is a district serving approximately 13,000 students. The relatively small percent of families benefiting from the program, combined with the overwhelming request for expanded parent education services by both educators and families within the district, indicates a great need to expand the program.

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Table 1
School Survey Respondents

Campus	Total Staff	N	Teachers	Principals	Other	% Response
Elementary						
Bonham	57	28	25	0	3	49
Bowen	31	16	14	0	2	52
Branch	59	20	16	0	4	34
Carver	29	9	6	1	2	31
Crockett	48	27	24	0	3	56
Fannin	43	17	13	1	3	40
Henderson	33	8	6	0	2	24
Houston	49	30	22	1	7	61
Johnson	32	14	14	0	0	44
Jones	61	28	22	0	6	46
Kemp	42	20	15	0	5	48
Milam	55	35	28	0	7	64
Navarro	42	20	17	0	2	48
Ross	46	16	12	1	3	35
Secondary						
Bryan High	177	66	55	3	8	37
Lamar	73	30	25	0	5	41
Hammond-Oliver	11	7	6	1	0	64
ACE	14	7	4	0	3	50
Long	94	43	36	1	6	46
Rayburn	91	28	25	0	3	31
Austin	86	36	31	0	5	42
SOS	12	3	3	0	0	25

Table 2
Means of Parent Involvement Questions by Campus

Campus	Parents Are Involved	Importance	Parent Educator
Elementary			
Bonham	3.68	4.59	4.14
Bowen	4.44	4.69	4.25
Branch	4.00	4.79	4.39
Carver	3.67	4.89	4.89
Crockett	2.70	4.80	3.90
Fannin	2.82	4.76	4.64
Henderson	3.70	4.30	4.30
Houston	4.27	4.63	4.3
Johnson	4.79	4.57	4.00
Jones	1.57	4.32	4.57
Kemp	2.21	4.60	4.80
Milam	3.09	4.74	4.69
Navarro	3.80	4.00	3.80
Ross	3.81	4.50	4.25
Secondary			
Bryan High	2.98	4.52	4.02
Lamar	2.36	4.37	4.03
Hammond-Oliver	3.28	4.71	4.14
ACE	2.55	4.10	4.00
Long	2.35	4.72	4.23
Rayburn	3.34	4.48	3.97
Austin	3.56	4.50	4.14
SOS	2.67	5.00	4.00

Table 3
Familiarity with PEPP Program by Campus

Campus	Total Respondents	Familiar with Program	%
Elementary			
Bonham	28	12	43
Bowen	16	3	19
Branch	19	7	37
Carver	8	2	25
Crockett	26	20	77
Fannin	14	5	36
Henderson	8	4	50
Houston	30	19	63
Johnson	14	8	57
Jones	27	5	19
Kemp	20	10	50
Milam	33	24	73
Navarro	17	14	82
Ross	16	10	63
Secondary			
Bryan High	63	10	16
Lamar	29	3	10
Hammond-Oliver	7	4	57
ACE	6	6	100
Long	43	7	16
Rayburn	29	7	24
Austin	36	12	33
SOS	3	1	33

Appendix A
Survey Instruments

School Survey

Please indicate your position: teacher principal counselor nurse other:_____

1. How do you define parent involvement?

2. Parents are actively involved on my campus.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. Parent involvement is very important to the success of children on my campus.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. I would support having a parent educator on my campus.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. List two strategies you have used to increase parent involvement:

6. What topics should be addressed at parent education classes on your campus?

7. Are you familiar with the Parent Education Partnership Program (PEPP)? ❒ yes ❒ no

If you are familiar with the PEPP program, please continue.
If not, thank you for your time.

8. Have there been any PEPP meetings on your campus? ❒ yes ❒ no

9. Have you attended any PEPP meetings? ❒ yes ❒ no If yes, how valuable were they?

Not Valuable	Of Little Value	Neutral	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable
1	2	3	4	5

10. Have any parents of your students attended PEPP meetings? ❒ yes ❒ no ❒ N/A
If yes, how valuable were they?

Not Valuable	Of Little Value	Neutral	Somewhat Valuable	Very Valuable
1	2	3	4	5

11. Have you used any incentives to encourage parents of your students to attend PEPP meetings?
❒ yes ❒ no If yes, what were they and how well did they work?

12. Do you feel that parents are more involved on your campus because of the PEPP program?
❒ yes ❒ no Why or why not?

13. How would you rate the effectiveness of the PEPP program?

Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Neutral	Effective	Very Effective
1	2	3	4	5

Use the back of the page, if necessary.

Return survey through Inter-Campus Mail to PEPP/Center for Alternative Programs

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Parent Survey

Relationship with Child:

1. Since you've been working with _____ (PE), would you say that your relationship with _____ (child) has improved?

   Why?/How?

Home/School Community Involvement:

2. Name some activities you do regularly with _____ (child) in the home.

3. How has _____ (PE) influenced what you do with _____ (child)?

If they have school age children:

4. How often do you contact the school?

   Who do you contact? (Get name and position.)

   For what reasons might you contact them?

5. How often does the school contact you?

   Who contacts you? (Get name and position.)

   How are you contacted?

   For what reasons are you contacted?

6. Do you contact the school more than you did before you were involved with the PEPP program?

If no school age children:

7. Do you know what school _____ (child) will be attending?

8. Have you visited there?

Community:

9. Where do you take _____ (child) out in the community?

10. Did you do these types of activities before you were in the PEPP program?

11. Has your parent educator encouraged you to do things out in the community?

    What things? Have you done any of them?

Information/Training/Support Provided:

12. What types of information have you received from _____ (PE)?

13. Did this information help? How?

14. What kinds of things has _____ (PE) taught you?

15. How regularly do you use these things that you were taught?

16. Do these things help you? How?

17. How has _____ (PE) been supportive to you and your family since you've been working with her?

18. How might _____ (PE) be more supportive?

19. List two examples of things that _____ (PE) has done that has really helped your family.

Summary:

20. What are some ways we can improve the PEPP program?

21. Do you have any ideas for helping the parent educators improve in their role? (How can _____ (PE) help you better?)

Appendix B
Parent Interview Results

PEPP Evaluation
Family Interviews: Summary of Findings

At the time of this evaluation, six parent educators in the PEPP program were working with 98 families. Of these families, 26 are teen parents (27%), 20 are Spanish-only speaking families (20%), 24 are English-speaking (24%), and 28 are open enrollment families (29%). Interviews were conducted with 62 families (63% of total) to evaluate the program. Below is a report showing interview questions and summarized findings.

Relationship with Child

1. **Since you've been working with the parent educator, would you say that your relationship with your child has improved?**
   48 (77%) said yes
   6 (10%) said no
   8 (13%) said they had been in the program since pregnancy/birth of their child

   4 respondents said their relationship with their children was already good; 2 said their relationship was enhanced.

   Why? How?
   Understanding/knowledge of developmental stages
   Improved communication
   Have learned many ideas/suggestions for activities
   Enhanced relationship/improved parenting skills

Home/School Community Involvement

2. **Name some activities you do regularly with your child in the home.**
   63 responses, most of which could be categorized as:
   Reading
   Playing Games
   Art Activities
   Learning Activities

3. **How has the parent educator affected what you do with your child?**
   54 families (87%) said they were impacted by their parent educator in the following ways:
   Relationship with child(ren) is better
   Provided support (objectively)
   Provided ideas/suggestions - age-appropriate ones
   Provided educational information

   8 families (13%) said they were not impacted

4. **How often do you contact the school? (17 families had school-aged children)**
   3 contact the school every day
   3 contact the school often
   4 contact the school rarely
   7 never contact the school

   Who do you contact?
   8 contact the teacher
   2 contact the principal
   4 contact other school personnel

   For What reasons might you contact them?
   6 contact school personnel to see how children are doing
   4 contact school personnel for problems
   one contacts school personnel to pick child up early
   one contacts school personnel for medical reasons

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5. **How often does the school contact you?**
   5 are contacted frequently
   3 are contacted infrequently
   7 are never contacted

   Who contacts you?
   10 families are contacted by the teacher

   How are you contacted?
   9 are contacted by written messages
   7 are contacted by telephone
   2 receive personal contacts

   For what reasons are you contacted?
   7 are contacted for special needs/events
   3 are contacted regarding student progress
   6 are contacted when there is a problem with their child

6. **Do you contact the school more than you did before you were involved in the PEPP program?**
   3 said yes
   10 said no
   4 said not applicable

7. **Do you know what school your child will be attending? If so, which?**
   34 know the school their child will attend
   19 do not know the school their child will attend (12 of these were teen parents)
   2 are moving to another district

8. **Have you visited there?**
   22 have visited the school

9. **Where do you take your child out in the community?**
   45 activities , most of which could be categorized as:
      Stores/mall
      Restaurants/out to eat
      Park
      Church
      Outdoor Events

10. **Did you do these types of activities before you were in the PEPP program?**
    20 said yes
    6 said no
    2 said sometimes
    30 have been with program since birth or infancy

11. **Has your parent educator encouraged you to do things out in the community?**
    43 said yes 43
    18 said no 18
       Comments:
          but program is about community activities
          child is very young
          I work
          already knew what goes on
          new to program
          child is too young

What things? Have you done any of them?
One time events
Attend meetings
Participate in school activities
Do outdoor activities
Participate in activities with other families

Information/Training/Support Provided

12. **What types of information have your received from your parent educator?**
29 responses, most of which could be categorized as:
Developmental stages
Community services
Home-made toys and games
Parenting Information (especially regarding behavior/discipline)

13. **Did this information help?**
59 said yes
2 said no (one will ask if need help)

How?
Understanding children/know what to expect
How to help my child
Support/suggestions/ideas provided (objectively)
How to deal with children

14. **What kinds of things has your parent educator taught you**
62 different responses, most of which could be categorized as:
Patience
Discipline techniques/coping and handling situations
Expectations
Child development
Communication skills

15. **Do you use these things that you were taught?**
50 said yes
0 said no
1 said can't remember

How often?
26 said everyday
12 said often
6 said as needed
8 said infrequently
Comments:
keep handouts in a file
consistently feel lucky to have PE
very dependent on her advice
watch her and do the same thing
refer to papers and call

16. **Do these things help you?**
52 said yes
0 said no

How?
Knowing expectations, what is normal
Informed decision making, give more choices
Ideas, activities, advice, support
Increased confidence
Help me be a better parent

Parent Educator

17. **Has your parent educator been supportive to you and your family since you've been working with her?**
57 said yes
3 said no (didn't need support; one said PE has offered; one said knew PE would help if needed)

How?
55 responses, most of which could be categorized as:
Listens
Gives suggestions, good advice as needed
Encouraging, supportive, understanding, available
Teaches things
Helps access services

18. **How might your parent educator be more supportive?**
*Most families said the parent educator couldn't be more supportive or they couldn't think of anything
Spend more time with families
Provide more information
Take us places

19. **List two examples of things that your parent educator has done that have really helped your family.**
Most examples could be categorized as:
Provide child development information
Choices about discipline
Provide school-related information
Ideas for play (between parents and children)
Individual encouragement/support

Summary

20. **What are some ways we can improve the Parent Education Partnership Program (PEPP)?**
Better meetings
More parent educators
Advertise program
Increase services (resource room, visits, play groups, work with older children)

21. **Do you have any ideas for helping the parent educators improve in their role?**
Spend more time with families, more visits
Individualize
Work with older children
Work with all children
Tailor program to child
Expand program